INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM

NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

ORGANIZATIONAL

OVERVIEIW

MODULE 3
1-200

REFERENCE
TEXT
OCTOBER 1994

NFES 2443

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

on behalf of the
NATIONAL WILDFIRE COORDINATING GROUP

The following training ***material attains the standards prescribed for courses developed under the interagency curriculum*** established and ***coordinated by the*** National ***Wildfire Coordinating Group. The instruction is*** certified for ***interagency use and is*** known as:

Organizational Overview

Member NWCG and Training Working Team Liaison

Date

Chair, Training Working Team

Date

Description of the Performance Based System

The Wildland Fire Qualifications System is a "performance based" qualifications system. In this system, the primary criteria for qualification is individual performance as observed by an evaluator using approved standards. This system differs from previous wildland fire qualifications systems which have been “training based." Training based systems use the completion of training courses or a passing score on an examination as a primary criteria for qualification.

A.performance based system has two advantages over a training based system:

- Qualification is based upon real performance, as measured on the job, versus perceived performance, as measured by an examination or classroom activities.

- Personnel who have learned skills from sources outside wildfire suppression, such as agency specific training programs or training and work in prescribed fire, structural fire, law enforcement, search and rescue, etc., may not be required to complete specific courses in order to qualify in a wildfire position.

The components of the wildland fire qualifications system are as follows:

a. Position Task Books (PM contain all critical tasks which are required to perform the job. PTB's have been designed in a format which will allow documentation of a trainee's ability to perform each task. Successful completion of all tasks required of the position, as determined by an evaluator, will be the basis for recommending certification.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Training requirements include completion of all required training courses prior to obtaining a PTB. Use of the suggested training courses or job aids is recommended to prepare the employee to perform in the position.

b. Training courses and -job aids provide the specific skills and knowledge required to perform tasks as prescribed in the PTB.

c. Agency Certification is issued in the form of an incident qualification card certifying that the individual is qualified to perform in a specified position.

2. Responsibilities

The local office is responsible for selecting trainees, proper use of task books, and certification of trainees, see the Task Book Administrators Guide 330-1 for further information.

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NATIONAL TRAINING CURRICULUM

MODULE 3

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

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PREFACE

This module is one of seventeen modules which comprise the Incident Command System (ICS) National Training Curriculum. The entire curriculum has been developed by an interagency steering group and a contract consultant. The curriculum was sponsored by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, and development was directed and supported by the National Interagency Fire Center, Division of Training. The Steering Group was represented by several application areas (Search & Rescue, Law Enforcement, Structural Fire, Wildfire, etc.) which guided the work of the contractor in the development of this package.

The Steering Group was:

David P. Anderson - USDA, Forest Service
Mike Colgan - Orange County Fire Department
Dave Engle - USDI, Bureau of Land Management
Dan Francis - California Department of Forestry
Ken Mallette - New Jersey State Police
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Gary Nelson - Los Angeles County Fire Department
Bill Vargas - State of New Mexico Department of Public Safety

The Contract Consultant was:

The Terence Haney Company
Woodland Hills, California

Subjects covered in this module include:

Terminology
Organizational Structure
How the organization initially develops at an incident
How the organization expands and/or contracts
Transfer of command

Objectives:

1. Explain how the incident organization expands or contracts to meet operational needs of the incident or event.

2. Describe the use of Branches, Divisions, and Groups within the Operations Section, and provide supervisory titles associated with each level.

3 . List the essential elements of information involved in transfer of command.

4. Match organizational positions with appropriate ICS sections.

5 . Describe an ICS organization appropriate to a small incident using an Incident Briefing form.

I. Introduction

The ICS organization is functional, modular. and flexible. One way to view it is like a template. Within each of the major functional areas, there are several sub-levels that can be used or expanded as necessary. The flexibility comes in because any position can be filled without the necessity of filling all positions above it.

II. Organizational Terminology

The use of position titles in ICS serves three important purposes.

I . Titles provide a common standard for multi-agency use at an incident. For example, if one agency uses the title Branch Chief, another Branch Manager, another Branch Officer, etc., this can cause confusion and reflect the lack of standardization on the scene.

2. The use of distinctive titles for ICS positions allows for filling ICS positions with the most qualified individuals independent of their rank within their own organization.

3. The lack of standardization of position titles can also confuse the ordering process when requesting qualified personnel. For example, in ordering additional personnel to fill unit positions, it is important for proper communications between the incident and the agency dispatch facilities to know if they will be Unit Leaders, Unit Officers, supervisors, etc.

III. Establishing the ICS Organization

The management of any incident or an event always includes **five** major functions. One person (the Incident Commander) can be responsible for all functions, or they can each be represented by a major section of the ICS organization. The functions are:

Command
Operations
Planning
Logistics
Finance/Administration

On any incident, large or small, the Incident Commander has ultimate responsibility for the effective and safe execution of each of these five functions.

On small incidents, the Incident Commander may perform all functions. On large incidents the Incident Commander may delegate the authority for managing certain functions.

We will briefly cover each of the major functions and review their application within the ICS organizational framework.

A. Incident Command

Incident Command has overall responsibility for the management of incident activity. Even if other functions are not filled, an Incident Commander will always be designated.

The Incident Command function may be carried out in two ways:

I . Single Command

2. Unified Command

Unified Command, which is a management method to use for multi-jurisdictional and/or multi-agency events, is a major feature of ICS and will be discussed as part of Module 13.

In this module, we will cover Single Command, which is the most common application.

Usually, the person in charge of the first arriving units at the scene of an incident assumes the Incident Commander role. That person will remain in charge until formally relieved, or until transfer of command is accomplished.

NOTE: that single unit and personnel radio identification calls may continue to be used until a formal incident has been declared and named. This will be done by agency policy.

ICS position titles will be used instead of agency radio call signs when referring to ICS organizational positions. Agency policy will determine when this is done.

Agencies vary on how and when they make the transition from agency radio designators to ICS position terminology, and there is no hard and fast rule.

Once the incident is formally designated, ICS terminology is always used for:

_ Organizational elements - e.g., Division, Branch, Unit, etc.

Position titles - e.g., Officer, Director, Leader, etc.

_ Facilities - e.g., Incident Command Post, Staging Area, etc.

_ Resources - e.g., Task Forces, Strike Teams, etc.

Upon arriving at an incident, higher ranking personnel will either assume command, maintain command as is, or reassign command to a third party.

In some situations or agencies, lower ranking but more qualified persons (for that incident) may be designated as the Incident Commander.

The Incident Commander will perform the major ICS organizational functions of Operations, Logistics, Planning, and Finance/Administration until determining that the authority for one or more of these functions should be delegated.

'Me Incident Commander will also perform the Command Staff functions of Safety, Liaison, and Information until determining that one or more of these functions should be delegated.

The Incident Commander may have one or more deputies. The only ICS requirement regarding the use of a deputy, whether at the Incident Commander, Section, or Branch level, is that the deputy must be fully Qualified to assume the position.

There are three primary reasons to designate a deputy Incident Commander:

I . To perform specific tasks as requested by the Incident Commander.

2. To perform the incident command function in a relief capacity, e.g., to take over the next operational period. (In this case, the deputy will assume the primary role.)

3. To represent an assisting agency that may share jurisdiction or have jurisdiction in the future.

B. Command Staff

Three other important staff functions are the responsibility of the Incident Commander:

Information
Safety
Liaison

These responsibilities will be performed by the Incident Commander unless the responsibility is delegated to one of the following people.

1. Information Officer

The Information Officer is the central point for dissemination of information to the news media and other agencies and organizations.

Only one Information Officer will be named to an incident, including those incidents, which are multi-jurisdictional. The Information Officer may have assistants as necessary, and the assistants may also represent other agencies or jurisdictions.

2. Safety Officer

The Safety Officer function is to assess hazardous and unsafe situations, and develop measures for assuring personnel safety.

However, the Safety Officer may exercise emergency authority to directly stop unsafe acts if personnel are in imminent, life-threatening danger.

Only one Safety Officer will be named to an incident. The Safety Officer may have assistants as necessary, and the assistants may represent other agencies or jurisdictions.

3. Liaison Officer

The Liaison Officer is the point of contact at the incident for personnel from assisting or cooperating agencies. There is only one Liaison Officer on any incident. Very large incidents may require the use of assistants.

4. Agency Representatives

An agency or jurisdiction will often send tactical resources to assist at an incident. In ICS, these are called assisting agencies.

These outside agencies may also send an Agency Representative to work with the incident management team to coordinate between agencies or jurisdictional considerations.

Agency Representatives report to the Liaison Officer. Other agencies such as the Red Cross or utilities may also be involved in the incident, and are called cooperating agencies. Their Agency Representatives would also report to the Liaison Officer.

5. Assistant: A level of technical capability, qualifications, and responsibility subordinate to primary positions.

Assistants are used as subordinates for the Command Staff positions, particularly Information Officer and Safety Officer. Assistants may also be used at camps to supervise unit activities.

C. General Staff

1. Operations Section

The Operations Section is responsible for the direction and coordination of all incident tactical operations. This is done under the direction of the Operations Section Chief.

Operations at an incident or event can be set up in a variety of ways depending upon:

Kind of incident.
Agencies involved.
Objectives and strategy.

The Operations Section will expand or contract based upon the existing and projected needs of the incident.

Initially, the Operations Section usually consists of those few resources first assigned to an incident. (These resources will initially report directly to the Incident Commander.)

As additional resources are committed and the incident becomes more complex, a separate Operations Section may be established.

The Operations Section develops from the bottom up by first establishing Divisions, Groups, and if necessary, Branches. Also, the Operations Section may have Staging Areas and, in some cases, an air organization.

We will briefly examine a number of combinations for the use of Divisions, Groups, and Branches, and discuss four methods of establishing the Operations Section.

a. Geographic Divisions

A common method of organizing tactical operations at an incident is for the Incident Commander to first establish two or more Divisions. Divisions always refer to geographically defined areas, e.g., the area around a stadium, the inside or floors of a building, or an open area.

Initially, establishing Divisions may be done for purposes of "defining the incident," and may or may not include the designation of separate Division Supervisors.

When the resources assigned within a Division exceed, or will soon exceed, the recommended span of control guidelines of one to five, Division Supervisors should be designated.

Divisions not under the direct management of the Incident Commander or Operations Section Chief are managed by Division Supervisors. Divisions will not have deputy positions.

b. Functional Groups

Another common method of organizing operations at an incident **is** to establish functional groups. As the name implies, this form of organization deals not with geographic areas, but with functional activity.

Examples of functional groups include medical groups, search and rescue groups, perimeter security groups, maritime salvage groups, etc.

Groups, like divisions, are managed by Supervisors. There are no group deputy positions.

c. Combined Divisions and Groups

A third method is the use of combined geographic divisions and functional groups.

This approach is commonly used when a functional activity operates across divisional lines. For example, a specialized Canine Search Group would be used wherever required and moved as needed on an earthquake incident.

In any organization in which combined divisions and groups are used, it is important that the supervisors establish and maintain close communications and coordination. Each will have equal authority; neither supervisor will be subordinate to the other.

d. Branches

A fourth method of Operations Section organization is to establish a branch structure. Branches may be either geographic or functional.

Geographic branches may be established because of span of control considerations, e.g., when more than five divisions are established, or functional branches may be established to manage various operations functions.

Geographic and functional branches may be used together on an incident.

Branches will be managed by a Branch Director. Branch directors may have deputy positions as required. In multi-agency incidents, the use of deputy branch directors from assisting agencies can be of great benefit to ensure and enhance interagency coordination.

In addition to the Operations Section positions discussed so far, there are two additional and important organizational elements that should be covered:

e. Staging Areas

Staging Areas are locations set up at an incident where resources can be placed while awaiting a tactical assignment.

Once a Staging Area has been designated and named, a Staging Area Manager will be assigned. The Staging Area Manager will report to the Operations Section Chief or to the Incident Commander if the Operations Section Chief has not been designated.

All resources in the Staging Area should be available for assignment on a three-minute notice. This is an important consideration. Staging Areas should not be used to locate out-of-service resources or for logistics functions. Staging Areas may be relocated as necessary.

In some applications, branches may have separate staging areas. For example, a medical branch may have an ambulance staging area assigned to the branch.

f. Air Operations Branch

Some kinds of incidents will make use of aviation resources to provide tactical or logistical support. On smaller incidents, aviation resources will be limited in number and will report directly to the Incident Commander or to the Operations Section Chief if that position has been established.

On larger incidents, it may be desirable to activate a separate Air Operations organization to coordinate the use of aviation resources. The Air Operations organization will then be established at the Branch level,

The Air Operations Branch Director can establish two functional groups. The Air Tactical Group coordinates all airborne activity. The Air Support Group provides all incident ground based support to aviation resources.

2. Planning Section

The Planning Section is responsible for the collection and evaluation of incident situation information, preparing situation status reports, displaying situation information, maintaining status of resources, developing an Incident Action Plan, and preparing required incident related documentation. This is done under the direction of the Planning Section Chief. The Planning Section Chief may have a deputy.

The Planning Section, if established by the Incident Commander, will have responsibility for several important functions:

_ Maintaining resource status

_ Maintaining and displaying situation status

_ Preparing the Incident Action Plan

_ Providing documentation services

_ Preparing the Demobilization Plan

_ Providing a primary location for technical specialists assigned to an incident.

Technical specialists are advisors with special skills required at the incident. Technical specialists will initially report to the Planning Section, work within that section, or be reassigned to another part of the organization. Technical specialists can be in any discipline required, e.g., aviation, environment, hazardous materials, etc.

One of the most important functions of the Planning Section is to look beyond the current and next operational period, and anticipate potential problems or events.

The Planning Section may be organized into
four unit-level positions.

a. Resources Unit - Responsible for all check-in activity, and for maintaining the status on all personnel and equipment resources assigned to the incident.

b. Situation Unit - Collects and processes information on the current situation, prepares situation displays and situation summaries, develops maps and projections.

C. Documentation Unit - Prepares the Incident Action Plan, maintains all incident-related documentation, and provides duplication services.

d. Demobilization Unit - On large, complex incidents, the Demobilization Unit will assist in ensuring that an orderly, safe, and cost-effective movement of personnel will be made when they are no longer required at the incident.

3. Logistics Section

Units in the Logistics Section are responsible for providing services and support to meet all incident or event needs. This is accomplished under the direction of the Logistics Section Chief. A deputy Logistics Section Chief may be assigned.

Logistics service and support to an incident or event are important functions. Early recognition of the need for a separate logistics function and section can reduce time and money spent on an incident.

The Logistics Section Chief has responsibility for six principal activities at an incident.

Communications
Medical support to responders
Food for responders

supply
Facilities

Ground Support

NOTE: It is important to remember that logistics unit functions, except for the Supply Unit, are geared to supporting personnel and resources directly assigned to the incident.

For example, the Logistics Section Food Unit does not provide feeding for people who have been sent to shelters during a flood.

Under ICS, feeding of shelters would be handled as a part of an Operations Section activity. Food supplies would be ordered through the Logistics Section Supply Unit.

The Logistics Section Chief may establish separate units for one or more of the logistics support or service activities.

On large incidents when all six Logistics Section units are activated, or where there are many facilities and large amounts of equipment, it may be desirable, or necessary, to establish a two-branch structure. This will reduce the span of control for the Logistics Section Chief.

The two branches would be called Service Branch and Support Branch and have the following responsibilities:

a. Service Branch

Communications Unit - Develop the Communications Plan, distribute and maintain all forms of communications equipment, and manage the Incident Communications Center.

Medical Unit - Develop the Medical Plan, and provide first-aid and light medical treatment for personnel assigned to the incident. This unit also develops the emergency medical transportation plan (ground and/or air) and prepares medical reports.

Food Unit - Responsible for determining and supplying the feeding and potable water requirements at all incident facilities, and for active resources within the Operations Section. The unit may prepare menus and food, provide them through catering services, or use some combination of both methods.

b. Support Branch

Supply Unit - Orders personnel, equipment, and supplies. The unit stores and maintains supplies, and services non-expendable equipment. In ICS, all resource orders are placed through the Lo2istics Section's Supl2ly Unit. If the Supply Unit has not been established, the
responsibility for ordering rests with the Logistics Section Chief.

Facilities Unit - Sets up and maintains whatever facilities may be required in support of the incident. Provides managers for the Incident Base and camps. Also provides security support for the facilities and incident as required.

Ground Support Unit - Provides transportation, and maintains and fuels vehicles assigned to the incident.

4. Finance/Administration Section

The Finance/Administration Section is responsible for monitoring incident-related costs, and administering any necessary procurement contracts.

The Finance/Administration Section may not be activated on all incidents. The Incident Commander will retain responsibility for all finance-related activities until Finance/Administration units or the section has been activated.

There are four units which may be established in the Finance/Administration Section. These are:

a. Time Unit - Ensures that all personnel time on an incident or event is recorded.

b. Procurement Unit - Processes administrative paperwork associated with equipment rental and supply contracts. Responsible for equipment time reporting.

C. Compensation/Claims Unit - This unit combines two important functions.

Coml2ensation is responsible for seeing that all documentation related to workers compensation is correctly completed. Also, Compensation maintains files of injuries and/or illnesses associated with the incident.

Claims handles investigation of all claims involving damaged property associated with or involved in the incident.

d. Cost Unit - Responsible for collecting all cost information, and for providing cost estimates and cost savings recommendations.

IV. Developing the Organization

ICS is based on a requirement that the system must be capable of handling both small and large incidents.

In other words, ICS must be able to easily expand from very small, routine operations into a larger organization capable of handling a maximum size event. It must also be capable of selective and total demobilizing or downsizing in an efficient manner.

There are no hard and fast rules for when or how to expand the ICS organization. Many incidents will never require the activation of Planning, Logistics, or Finance/Administration Sections, while others will require some or all of them to be established.

The following are general guidelines that will be useful in developing the ICS organization.

A. Establish a Command Post

Designate an Incident Command Post and make its location known to all incident resources.

As an incident grows, the Incident Command Post may also expand in size. Therefore, the location selected should be capable of accommodating additional personnel.

The Command Post may be a vehicle, trailer, fixed facility or my location suitable to accommodate the function. Normally, the Incident Command Post will not be moved once established.

B. Develop Initial Organization

If the incident is growing in size or complexity, and/or reaching or exceeding span of control limits, it is important to rapidly establish the organizational framework necessary to manage it. This usually means filling essential General and Command staff positions first, although unit level positions may be filled whenever required.

It is better to overestimate the need for a larger organization than to underestimate it, as it is

always possible to downsize the organization.
Initial organization development on an expanding incident should provide positions to cover at least the following activities:

Check-in
Resource tracking
Logistical support

The experience of the Incident Commander is a key factor in successful incident management. The Incident Commander should be aware when a situation is growing or becoming more complex, and may require more resources. Arrival of the media and Agency Representatives is always a good indication of increasing complexity.

C. Consider Specialized Needs

Dealing directly with the media or support agency representatives can seriously disrupt the Incident Commander's attention to other matters. Assigning a person or persons to **fill** the Command Staff positions can save the Incident Commander a tremendous amount of time and trouble.

D. Monitor and Maintain Good Span of Control

Keep all elements of the organization within the span of control guidelines of between three and seven persons or elements reporting to a supervisor. A ratio of one to five is the model to follow whenever possible. Anticipate a growing incident and, as necessary, plan for span of control for a larger incident.

E. Demobilize Organizational Elements When No Longer Necessary

Avoid over-organization. If it is clear that a particular function is no longer required it is perfectly appropriate to demobilize the unit, and

to reassign or release the personnel. This is one of the features of ICS that keeps the organization size proportionate to the need and also reduces cost.

Anytime an ICS position is demobilized, the function it was performing goes to the next higher level in the chain of command.

F. Avoid Combining ICS Organizational Positions

One person may be assigned more than one function on the incident organization chart.

However, functional positions should not be combined within the organization. This could create problems later if units that were merged need to be separated.

For example, do not combine Logistics and Planning activities in one box on the
organizational chart. This can be confusing to both on- and off-incident personnel. Also, as the incident grows, it will be more difficult later to split the positions than it will be to assign a second person to manage one of the functions.

V. Transfer of Incident Command

One of the main features of ICS is the ability to transfer command with minimum disruption.

Transfer of incident command may take place when a senior person arrives at the scene and elects or has been designated by higher authority to assume the position of Incident Commander. This is often associated with a -growing incident.

Transfer of incident command can also take place in reverse, i.e., transferring command to a less senior or less qualified person in an incident which is under control or moving toward demobilization.

Transfers may also be needed for personnel assigned to assume command for new operational periods.

Transfer of incident command could also take place in certain situations when a lower ranking but more qualified person would be the best selection because of the unique circumstances associated with the incident.

The decision to transfer command is based on complexity of the incident, qualifications, and experience.

Every agency should have a checklist to follow for transfer of command. All checklists should include at least the following:

- _ Appropriate ICS terminology is being used at the incident.
- _ An Incident Command Post has been established.
- _ Transfer of command will take place face-to-face if possible.

  Outgoing Incident Commander to prepare and give a briefing.
- _ The new Incident Commander formally accepts command.
- _ Appropriate notifications are made to incident personnel and appropriate non-incident locations.

The transfer of incident command should include the following:

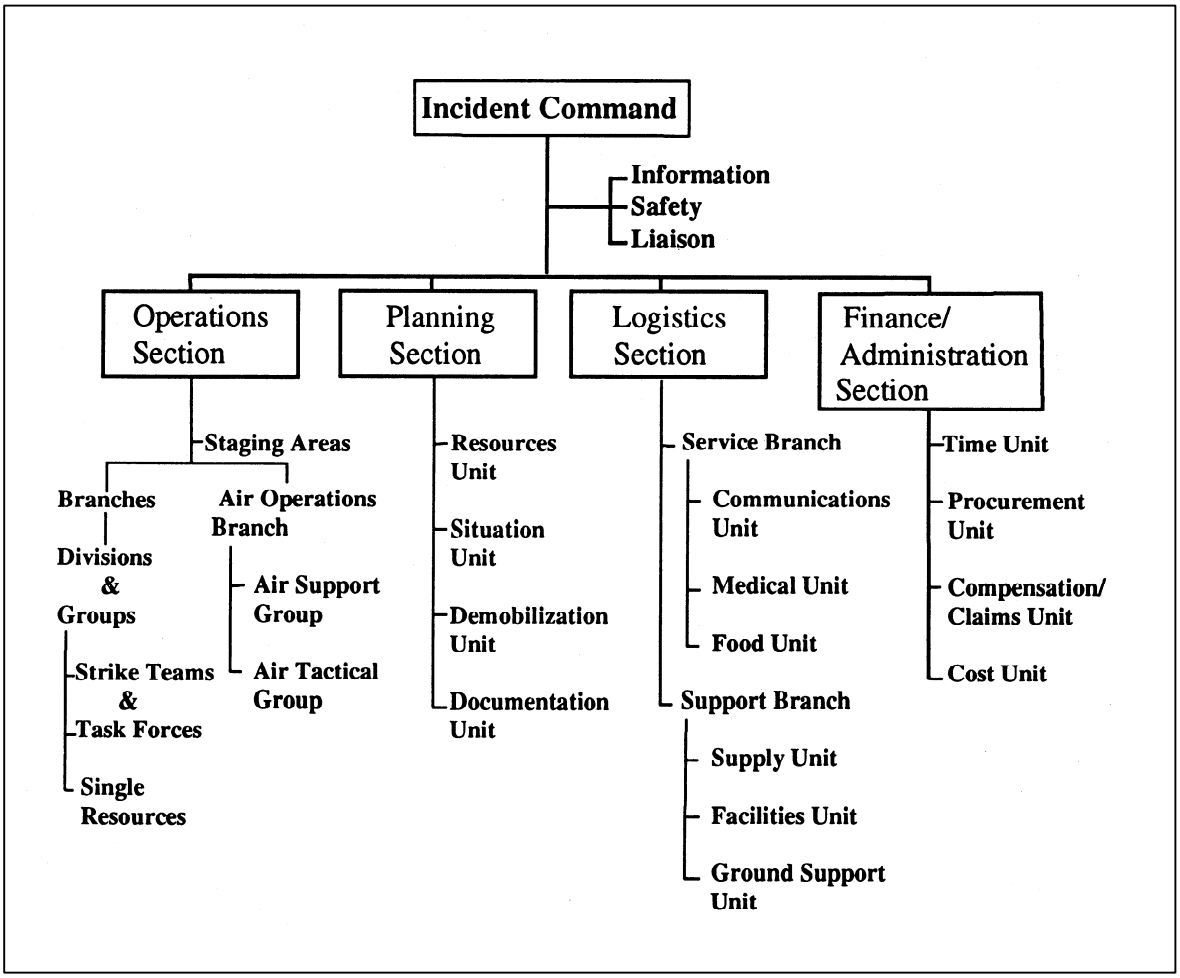
* Situation status
_ Objectives and priorities
_ Current organization
_ Resource assignments
_ Resources en-route and/or ordered
Facilities established
_ Communications Plan
_ Prognosis, concerns, related issues

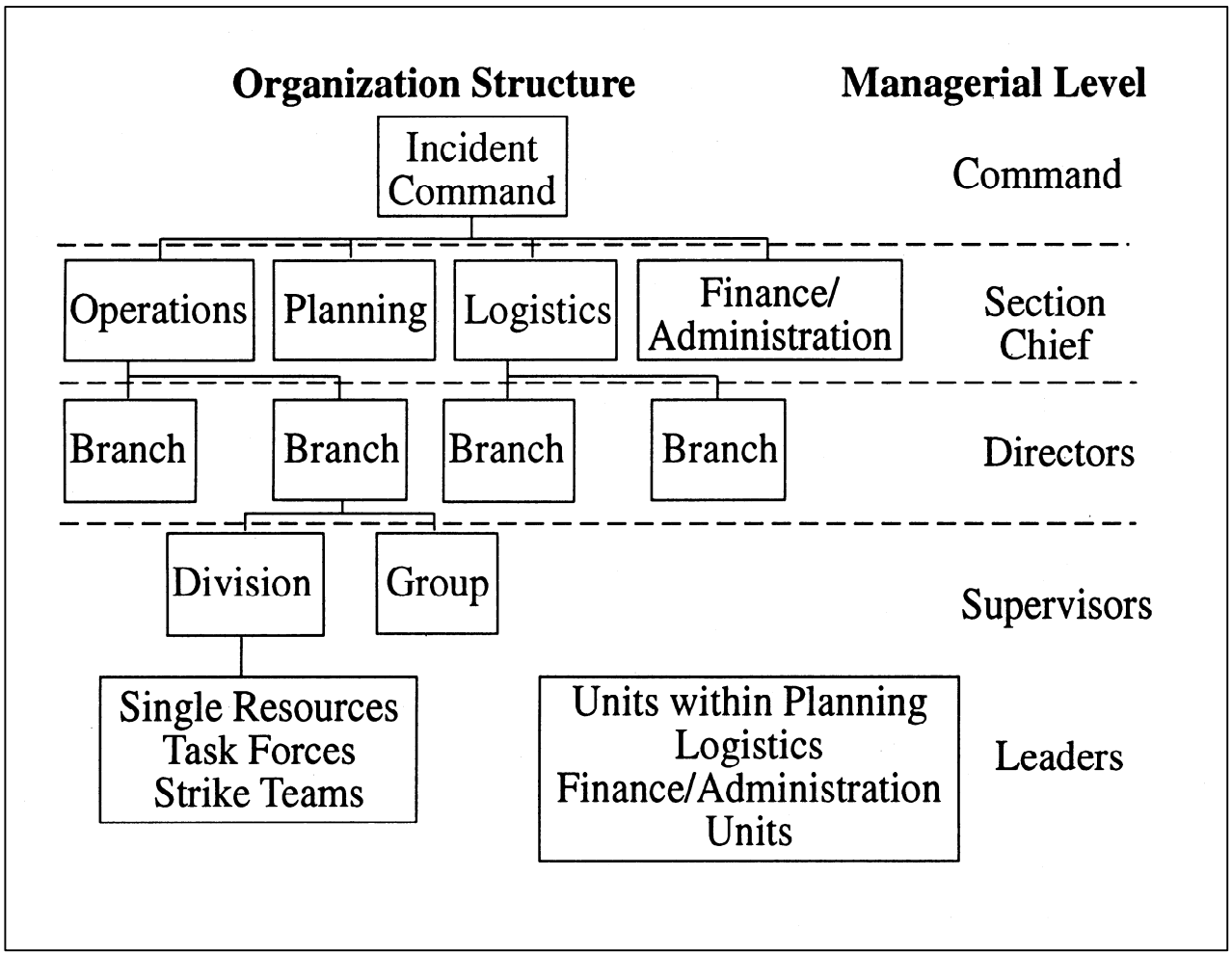
VI. Small Group Exercise on Incident Organization

MODULE 3
ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

Organizational Chart
Organizational Structure and Managerial Level
ICS Form 201
Exercise Scenario

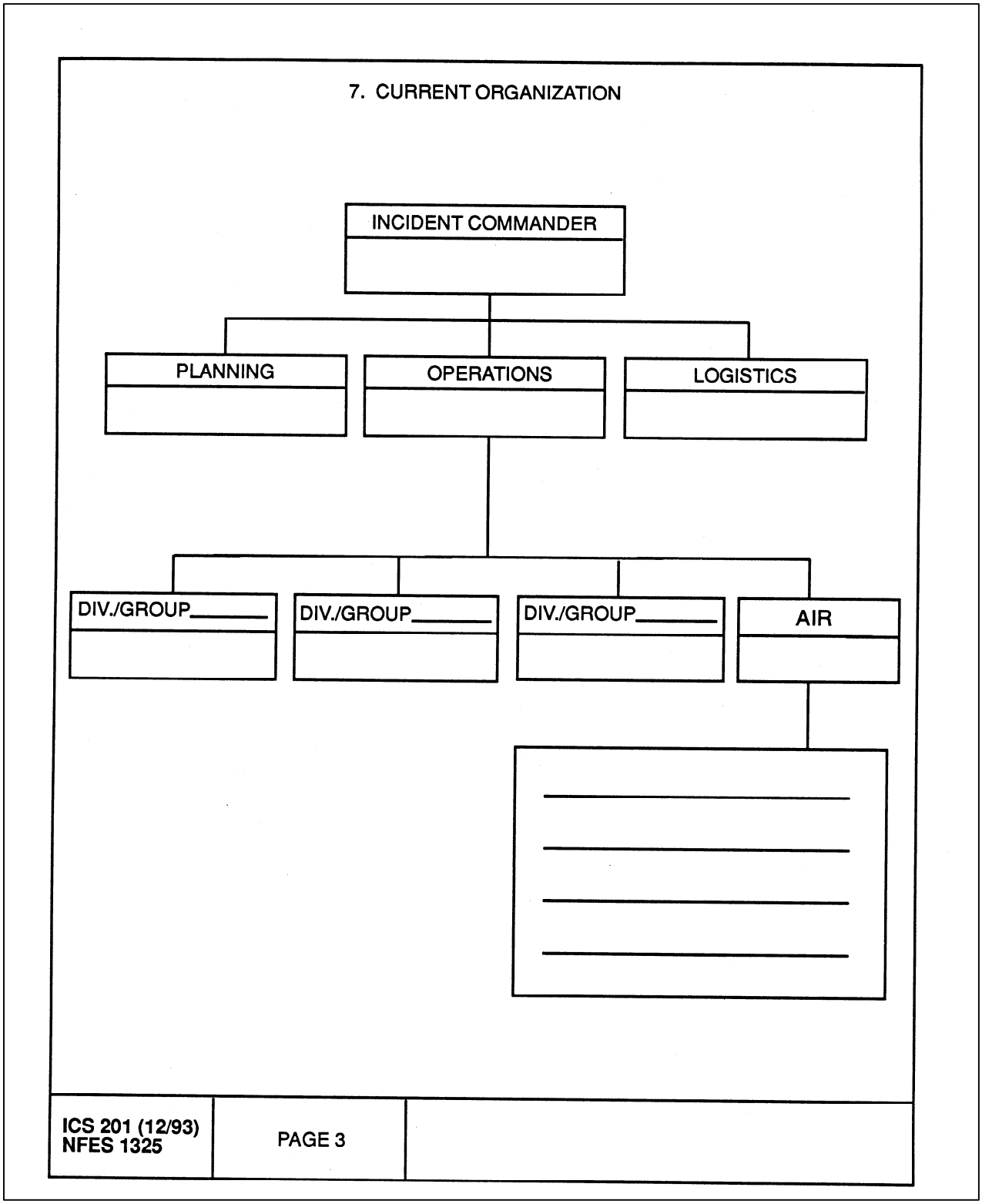
INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM ORGANIZATION




Organization Structure
Managerial Level
Incident Command
Command
Operations
Planning
Logistics
Finance/ Administration
Section Chief
Branch
Branch
Branch
Branch
Directors
Division
Group
Supervisors
Single Resources
Task Forces
Strike Teams
Units within Planning
Logistics
Finance/Administration
Units
Leaders

INCIDENT BRIEFING	1. INCIDENT NAME	2. DATE PREPARED	3. TIME PREPARED
4. MAP SKETCH			
ICS 201 (12/93) NFES 1325	PAGE 1	5. PREPARED BY (NAME AND POSITION)	

6. SUMMARY OF CURRENT ACTIONS		
ICS 201 (12/93) NFES 1325	PAGE 2	



Reference Text 3-33

8. RESOURCES SUMMARY				
RESOURCES ORDERED	RESOURCES IDENTIFICATION	ETA	ON SCENE √	LOCATION/ASSIGNMENT
ICS 201 (12/93) NFES 1325	PAGE 4			

SCENARIO: TRUCK ACCIDENT

Date: August 15
Time: 5 a.m.
Weather: Temp 65, wind is calm

You are a one-person state police unit, or _____

You come upon an accident involving a panel truck on a State highway. The driver is out of the truck and is unconscious by the roadway. The truck is laying on its side in a ditch which has water in it. The contents of the truck are strewn all over and some containers are leaking.

Traffic is slowing on both sides of the highway. Several citizens have stopped their cars and come over to assist you.

You have called for an ambulance and a second unit to assist in traffic.

One of the citizen bystanders who was inspecting the inside of the truck suddenly becomes ill and begins to vomit.

The ambulance and second police unit arrive. You realize you will now need an additional ambulance, a heavy duty tow, additional units for traffic control, the local fire department HAZMAT team. You may wish to order other units. You have also been advised that the media is en route and also the state fish and game department.

You realize that you are no longer in a position to provide good direct supervision over all of the on-scene and incoming resources. You have exceeded your span of control. Your supervisor is en route and will be on-scene in thirty minutes.

In small groups, discuss how you would organize this incident using the principles of ICS. This is not an exercise in tactics. You do not need to be concerned with unit deployment.

Use the Incident Briefing (ICS Form 201) to pull together information about this incident. Prepare the ICS Form 201 as though you were going to turn over command of this incident to another person. Diagram the scene, your proposed organization, list the resources you have and those en route, and state your current actions.

Be prepared to brief your supervisor.